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TURKMENISTAN

SUCCESS STORY

Training Boosts Health Care

USAID-funded ZdravPlus Project has trained 600 laboratory workers across Turkmenistan's health system



Laboratory workers practice their new skills.

Providing basic training and simple-to-use techniques to lab technicians is an important step in strengthening the health care in rural areas where people have less access to quality medical care.

With the goals of providing updated knowledge and new skills, and building capacity among health workers in Turkmenistan, the USAID-funded ZdravPlus Project has been facilitating laboratory trainings since 2002. To date, a total of 600 laboratory workers (including lab physicians, nurses, feldshers (nurse practitioners), and lab assistants) at varying levels of the health system have been trained throughout the five velayats of Turkmenistan and in the capital city of Ashgabat. The training improves lab skills in the areas of quality assurance, safety, infection prevention, and equipment use. In many of the training events, basic laboratory equipment such as microscopes, as well as solutions and reagents, has been donated to the laboratories where the trainings took place. ZdravPlus also provided each of the participants with a copy of a Laboratory Training Manual.

Laboratory training in Turkmenistan has been extremely popular with lab workers as well as the Ministry of Health as lab technicians have had few other opportunities to upgrade their skills.

According to one of the training participants, he had not had any training for the past 23 years; for another participant this was the first time that she had any lab training since leaving her previous specialty of gynecology to work as a lab technician.

The lab training course equips trainees with information on testing procedures and processes based upon international standards and experience. In contrast to the complex protocols for lab testing and diagnostics which prevail in the country, these procedures are simple—but difficult to follow due to limited equipment, reagents, and other supplies.

The lab training course takes place in a laboratory facility, and offers participants the opportunity to practice their skills in a practical, hands-on environment. This is in contrast to the theoretical training on laboratory methods most common in Turkmenistan, which does not offer students any opportunities to practice new skills in a practical environment. Pre- and post-tests show an impressive average 43% increase in knowledge by the end of the training, which is a significant boost to the lab workers' practical knowledge and skills.